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Telephone interviews were conducted with 115 housewives in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, to determine their interests, information sources, financial credit sources, plans for remodeling homes and purchasing household conveniences, and family participation in Extension programs. It was found that 28% of the women kept record books of income and expenses, 40% preferred a store credit plan and 34% a bank loan for credit sources, 22% planned household repairs or remodeling within the coming year, and 84% were not planning to buy any appliances or furnishings in the coming year. Participation in Extension activities, and watching television programs, attending meetings, and reading newspaper articles were generally low, with mothers of children under 21 most active. They were most interested in educational opportunities and careers for their children, interior decorating, and weight reduction and dieting, and showed a slight interest in attending meetings on these subjects; women with more education, children under 21, and white collar or skilled laborer husbands had more interests. Newsletters and newspapers were favored means of gaining information. (jf)

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INTERESTS AND INFORMATION SOURCES OF TIOGA COUNTY HOMEMAKERS

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INTERESTS AND INFORMATION SOURCES OF TIOGA COUNTY HOMEMAKERS

Emory J. Brown, Margaret Haines, and Barbara Kinnan*

Information about families is necessary to help in developing an educational program which fits their needs and interests. The Extension staff in Tioga County wanted to gather systematic information about the homemakers in their county to aid in planning a projected program for the next few years. This is a report of the findings from a survey conducted to obtain this information.

The major purpose of the survey was to answer these questions: What are the interests of the homemakers of the county? What methods would they prefer as a means of getting information? What sources do families use in borrowing money for household purchases? What plans do families have for buying household conveniences and remodeling of homes? How much do the families of the county now participate in the Extension program through personal, group contacts, and mass media?

The data for this survey were collected by use of telephone interviews with a sample of homemakers. Eighty-three percent of Tioga County families had a telephone, as of 1960. In order to choose a sample of all homemakers in the county, every 91st name was taken from the telephone directories. One hundred and eighteen names were selected in this way. These homemakers were contacted by 20 women who were volunteer callers.[1] A standardized schedule of

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*Extension Studies Specialist, The Pennsylvania State University and Extension Home Economist and Associate Home Economist, Tioga County. Mrs. Haines has recently retired and Ruth Dutcher has joined the staff.

[1]The following women performed the invaluable assistance by conducting the telephone interviews:

Mrs. Caroline Giordano, Elkland
Mrs. Paul Rexford, Gaines
Mrs. Wilber Beals, Mansfield
Mrs. Anne Tobey, Millerton
Mrs. Gordon Harvey, Mainesburg
Mrs. Hugh Lawson, Arnot
Mrs. Tom Brian, Elkland
Mrs. Ivan Kline, Nelson
Mrs. Leon Moshier, Wellsboro
Mrs. Carolyn Hughes, Wellsboro
Mrs. Robert Harding, Osceola
Mrs. Lewis Thomas, Elkland
Mrs. Charles Broughton, Morris
Mrs. Jay Peffer, Mansfield RD #3
Mrs. Byron Stickler, Tioga
Mrs. Terry Painter, Westfield
Miss Norma Harer, Liberty RD #1
Mrs. Ted Weld, Wellsboro
Mrs. Marilyn Pinnell, Wellsboro
Mrs. Henry Wood, Middlebury Center

questions was used by the women who did the calling. The interviewers were given training for this task. Calls were completed by these 20 women to all except 15 who refused or who were not available when they were called. Of these 15 homemakers, 12 were later personally interviewed in their homes by the Extension home economist. Hence, the completed schedules were obtained from 115 respondents. We feel confident this sample is representative of all homemakers in Tioga County except those not having a telephone.

Background Situation

As of 1960, Tioga County had a population of 36,614. It was anticipated that this number would increase to 39,000 by 1970 and 41,000 by 1980. Hence, it is a growing county but at a relatively slow rate. Of the population in 1960, 63 percent were rural nonfarm, 18 percent rural farm, and 19 percent urban. Only 1 percent were foreign born. In fact, 84 percent of the people were born in Pennsylvania.

In 1960 there were 9,149 families with a median income of $4,775 per family. This compares with $5,719 for the state of Pennsylvania. Slightly over 2,000 people were on public assistance.

Of the 12,593 workers in 1960, 9,978 worked in the county of Tioga. Hence, about 18.2 percent of the employed people work outside the county. This compares with 14.6 percent for the state of Pennsylvania. Thirty-one percent of the females 14 years and over were in the labor force compared with 33.3 percent for the state of Pennsylvania.

Thirty-six percent of the adult homemakers had eight grades or less of schooling while 41 percent had graduated from high school. Females 25 and over had an average of 11.6 years of education whereas males had 10.0 years. This level of schooling is slightly higher than for the state.

In 1960 about two-thirds of the people lived in the same house as they did in 1955. There were about 11 1/2 thousand housing units having a median value of $7,200. Of these houses, 79 percent are over 30 years old. When rated on condition, 74 percent were rated as sound, 22 percent as deteriorating, and 4 percent as dilapidated.

Eighty-eight percent have hot and cold running water, 85 percent private bath, and 87 percent flush toilet. As a source of water for these families, 42 percent came from public sources, 47 percent from individual wells, and 10 percent from some other source. For sewage disposal, 28 percent had access to public sewage, 59 percent had an individual septic tank or cesspool, and 12 percent

used some other means of dispensing sewage. Eighty-five percent of the homes had television and 92 percent had radio.

Findings of the Survey

Family Composition

The number of adults in these households varied from 1 to 6. Seventy-five percent of the families had two adults and 16 percent only one; 8 percent had more than two adults.

The ages of the husbands were typical of those in the total county. Fourteen percent were in their 20's, 20 percent in their 30's, 28 percent in their 40's, 17 percent in their 50's, 16 percent in their 60's and 5 percent were 70 or over. For the women, 17 percent were in the 20's, 19 percent in the 30's, 27 percent in the 40's, 13 percent in the 50's, and 27 percent were 60 or over. Most of the other adults in the households were in their 20's.

The number of children in these families ranged from 0 to 8. Forty percent of the families had no children under 21 years of age; of the remaining families with children, 31 percent had one child, 22 percent two children, 28 percent three children, and 19 percent more than three.

Of those families with children, 28 percent had children under five years of age, 33 percent had children 5-8 years of age, 28 percent had children 9-14 years of age, and 27 percent had children 15-19 years of age.

4-H

Those families with one or more children in the age range 9-19 were asked if any of them are in 4-H. Of the 51 families having children of eligible 4-H age, 6 or 12 percent had one or more children in 4-H. The others who had eligible age children were asked if any of their children would be interested in joining 4-H. Of the 43 who answered, 13 or 30 percent said yes. Another 5 percent said they were undecided. In other words, about 35 percent of the homemakers, with children of 4-H age who are not now in 4-H, felt their children would be interested in joining 4-H.

Allowance

Those with school age children were asked if they gave them an allowance. Fifty-four percent did not have school age children. Of those with school age children, 53 percent gave them an allowance. Of those who gave an allowance, 22 percent said it was less than 50

cents per week, 30 percent, 50 cents to a dollar, 11 percent one to two dollars, 11 percent two to three dollars, 18 percent over three dollars, and 7 percent no special amount.

Education

The wife was asked about the education of both herself and her husband. About 23 percent said the husband had some high school or less, and 64 percent said their husband graduated from high school; 11 percent reported their husbands had some type of schooling beyond high school. Of the wives, 28 percent had some high school or less, 55 percent completed high school, and 17 percent had some schooling beyond high school. Hence, this sample has an average educational level slightly higher than the total homemakers in the county. This may be because the ones with more schooling were more likely to have a telephone.

Occupation

Questions were asked about the occupation of the husband and wife. Eighty-eight percent of the husbands were employed, and 38 percent of the wives.

The wife was asked what type of work her husband does. This was fairly representative of the occupational distribution for all men in the county in that 5 percent were professionals, 11 percent managers, 6 percent clerical, 3 percent sales, 21 percent skilled workers, 12 percent semiskilled, 8 percent farmers, 21 percent laborers, and 13 percent were retired. The women had these occupations: 62 percent were homemakers only, 10 percent clerical, 7 percent sales, 5 percent professional, 4 percent managers, and 12 percent laborers. Only four families had children under 21 at home with a steady job.

Recording Keeping

Twenty-eight percent of the homemakers kept a home account record book of their income and expenditures. When asked to describe this home account record book, of the ones who kept records, 23 percent said it was a record or a budget book, 15 percent kept checking accounts, 19 percent kept a daily account, 8 percent a montly account, 12 percent a careful and complete account, 8 percent said the husband does everything, 4 percent said a personal type of account, 8 percent a partial account of some type, and 4 percent kept records only for income tax.

Credit Source

Homemakers were asked what type of credit they would use if they couldn't pay cash for larger purchases. Thirty-four percent

said a bank loan, 40 percent a store credit plan, 5 percent a finance or credit corporation source, and 22 percent would use cash only (would not consider credit).

When asked if they had borrowed money from a bank in the past year, 24 percent said yes; 3 percent had borrowed from a household finance company. When asked if they had bought appliances or furnishings on installment plans arranged for by the store within the past year, 22 percent said yes. Examples of purchases were: stoves, household furnishing, hide-a-bed, TV, vacuum cleaners, drapes, and washers.

Plans

When asked if they plan to make any household repairs or remodel the home within the next year, 22 percent said they do. The changes they had in mind included painting inside and outside the house, adding a room, enclosing a porch, repairing doors or floors, finishing or adding a basement, and buying a new house.

When asked what household appliances or furnishings they plan to buy within the next year, the ones most often mentioned were: kitchen applicances, bedroom furnishings, living room furniture, television, etc. It is significant that 84 percent were not planning to buy any specific applicance or furnishing within the next year. This does not mean that families will not be buying these items but that they have no conscious, specific plans at this time for future purchases.

Extension Participation

The homemakers were asked about various ways in which they might have participated in Extension activities in the past year. Fifteen percent had been to a meeting organized by an Extension home economist. Twenty percent had a home visit by an Extension staff member. Four percent visited the Extension office. Seventy-three percent received a news letter from the Extension home economist. Forty-nine percent read an article in the newspaper written by an Extension staff member and 21 percent had watched one or more Saturday TV Extension programs on Binghamton station at 12:30 p.m. (Table 1)

Radio

Several questions were asked about listening to the Extension radio programs. (Table 2) Three percent had heard the county agent's program at 6:25 a.m. the day interviewed. Another 7 percent

Table 1. Percent of Homemakers Who Participated in Various Ways in the Extension Program in the Past Year.

Method	Percent
Meeting	15
Home visit	20
Office visit	4
Newsletters	73
Newspaper article	49
TV	21

Table 2. Percent of Homemakers Who Saw Extension Radio Programs

	Percent
County Agent's 6:25 a.m. (today)	3
County Agent's 6:25 a.m. (past week)	7
County Agent's 12:35 p.m. (today)	7
County Agent's 12:35 p.m. (first week)	5
Agri-Digest in evening (today)	0
Agri-Digest in evening (past week)	3
Home economist, 11:05 a.m. (today)	9
Home economist, 11:05 a.m. (past week)	18

had watched the program at least once in the past week. Seven percent heard the Extension radio program at 12:35 p.m. the day they were interviewed, and five percent more did within the past week. None of the homemakers had heard the Penn State Agri-Digest program the previous evening at 5:55 p.m. Only 3 percent had heard it at least once in the previous week. Nine percent listened to the home economist's program at 11:05 a.m. the day interviewed, and 18 percent more said they had heard it at least once in the past week. In other words, about 10 percent heard the county agent's morning program some time within the past week, 12 percent heard his program at the noon hour, and about 26 percent heard the home economist's morning program. The listening audience to the Penn State Agri-Digest radio tapes in the evening is evidently quite small.

Newsletter

The Extension home economist had mailed a newsletter to all the people who were to be interviewed. Seventy-three percent were aware of having received it. They were asked how much of it they had found time to read. Of those who indicated receiving it, 62 percent had read all of it, 18 percent most of it, 13 percent little of it, and only 7 percent none of it.

When asked if they had done anything suggested in the letter, 16 percent said yes. Of the eleven who indicated doing something,

eight asked for pamphlets, one filled out a questionnaire, one attended a meeting, and one bought food recommended.

Extension Participation Index

An index to measure participation in Extension was developed by giving each homemaker a score of one for each of the following methods by which she took part in Extension: attending a meeting, going to the Extension office, being visited by someone from Extension, reading an Extension newspaper article, receiving a newsletter from Extension, watching the TV Extension program, and listening to an Extension radio program. The possible range of scores was 0 to 7. Only about 16 percent of the homemakers had a score above three. In fact, 10 percent had a score of 0. Only one homemaker participated all possible ways.

When this Extension participation score was related to whether or not the wife worked, the ones who did not work had higher scores than the ones who did work although the difference was not large. There was a tendency for families with children under 21 years of age to be higher participators in Extension than those who had no children. When related to the occupation of the husband, those with retired husbands were more likely to be low in participation. Also, where the husband was a professional, participation was fairly low. There was a tendency for the homemakers whose husbands were skilled laborers and farmers to be higher in participation.

Professional women tended to be low in participation. The middle age homemakers were more likely to have higher scores than the younger and the older ones.

Interests

The homemakers were given a list of homemaking topics and asked which they would like to read or hear more about. (Table 3) More than 30 percent were interested in interior decorating, educational opportunities, and careers for children. Between 20 and 30 percent were interested in home budget plans, disciplining or guiding children, furniture repair, floor coverings, interior decorating supplies, materials for home rebuilding and construction, flower arrangements, crafts in the home, weight reduction and dieting, improved appearance, life after 40, and educational tours to other areas and regions. Between 10 and 20 percent were interested in the use of small kitchen appliances, family outdoor recreation and exercise, and use of leisure time. Fewer than 10 percent wanted more information on buying of large appliances, credit buying, and birth control.

The home economists were tentatively planning to conduct meetings on "how to make simple household repairs." When the

Table 3. Percent of Homemakers Interested in Reading or Hearing About Various Homemaking Topics.

	Percent
Educational opportunities and careers for children	31
Interior decorating	30
Weight reduction and dieting	30
Flower arrangements	28
Disciplining (guiding) children	27
Crafts in the home	25
Interior decorating supplies	25
Furniture repair	25
Material for home rebuilding and construction	24
Educational tours to other areas and regions	22
Improved appearance	21
Floor covering	20
Home budget plan	20
Life after 40	20
Family outdoor recreation exercise	18
Use of leisure time	16
Use of small kitchen appliances	12
Credit buying	7
Installment buying	7
Buying of large appliances	6
Birth control	5

homemakers were asked if they would attend these meetings, 18 percent said they would, 14 percent were not sure, and 68 percent would not. When asked where they would like this meeting to be held, most of the homemakers mentioned a nearby community center, e.g., Mansfield, Mainsburg, Roseville, and Wellsboro. Convenience would be an important criterion in their decision about attending the proposed meeting.

Interest Scores

The homemakers were each given an interest score by applying a weight of one to each of the 21 items in which they were interested; the possible range of scores was 0 to 21. Of the total homemakers, 32 percent were not interested in any of the items; 26 percent had scores of 1 to 3; 15 percent, 4 to 6 percent; and 26 percent, 7 or more.

These scores were then related to characteristics of the homemakers. When they were related to the age of the homemaker, younger

homemakers had more interests than the older ones. Those who were 39 or less had an average of 7, those 40 to 59 had an average of 4.5, and those 60 or over had an average of 0.75, or less than one.

The interest scores were not related to whether or not the wife worked. It was somewhat related to the amount of schooling the wife had. Those with more schooling had more interests. There was also a tendency for those with one or more children under 21 years of age to have more interests than those without children. The homemakers whose husbands were laborers or retired had fewer interests than if the husbands were white collar workers or skilled laborers. There was little relationship between the type of work the housewife did and the number of interests she had, although white collar female workers tended to have more interests than blue collar workers.

Preferred Methods of Obtaining Information

The homemaker was asked what methods she would like to use in receiving information on various homemaking topics. She was asked for her first and second choice from seven methods. Nineteen percent did not answer the question probably becuase they were not interested in receiving any information. Of the others, 52 percent gave first preference to a newsletter from the home economist, 14 percent the newspaper, 13 percent the radio, and 13 percent television. Only 4 percent indicated meetings, 3 percent a personal visit from the home economist, and 1 percent the telephone. (Table 4)

Table 4. Percent of Homemakers Who Prefer Various Methods of Receiving Homemaking Information

	1st choice	2nd choice
	Percent	Percent
Newsletters from home economist	52	23
Newspaper	14	31
Radio	13	12
Television	13	7
Meetings	4	13
Personal visits from economist	3	4
Telephone	1	10
Total	100	100

When asked for their second choice as a method by which to receive information, 31 percent mentioned the newspaper, 23 percent the newsletter from the home economist, 13 percent meetings, 12 percent the radio, 10 percent the telephone, 7 percent television, and 4 percent a personal visit from the home economist. Hence,

the method most preferred was that of the newsletter from the home economist followed by the newspaper. The total homemakers prefer the same methods of receiving information as the homemakers living on farms.

The first choice by which these homemakers would like to receive information on homemaking topics was then related to various characteristics of the homemaker. When sorted on willingness to attend the meeting on simple household repairs, the ones who chose meetings as a first choice on how to receive information were more likely to say they would be willing to attend the meeting. The ones who chose a newsletter were more likely not to attend. Of the ones who chose television, no one was interested in attending the meeting. Hence, the ones more likely to attend the meeting are those who are more interested in a personal relationship between themselves and the source of the information.

Those who had been to an Extension meeting in the past year were more likely to choose a meeting, a newsletter, or the radio as methods of receiving information. Those homemakers who chose the meeting and newsletter as preferred methods were more likely to be higher participators in Extension than those who chose television, newspaper, and radio.

There was little relationship between the methods preferred and the level of schooling of the homemaker. There was no relationship between age and preferred method of obtaining information. When related to the number of homemaking interests, the ones who preferred television were more likely to have fewer interests than those who chose newspapers. Hence, channels of communication preferred by people are influenced by characteristics of the target audience.

Summary

1. This is a report of information obtained from 115 homemakers in Tioga County, selected to represent almost all homemakers in the county. They were interviewed by telephone (83 percent of the families have a telephone; those without a telephone are not represented in the sample).

2. These homemakers vary considerably in age, education, occupation, size of family, and mobility. Most of them live in small towns or open-country rural areas. There are about 10,000 families in the county. The population is expected to increase at a relatively slow rate.

3. For sources of credit these homemakers usually borrow money from a bank or use the store credit plan. However, about one-fourth said they never use credit.

4. According to the Census, about 80 percent of the houses are over 30 years old and at least 25 percent are in a deteriorating condition. About one-fourth of the homemakers have plans to make structural changes or major improvements in their houses.

5. Most of these homemakers are low participators in the Extension program. The two major channels by which the Extension staff reach these women are newsletters and newspapers. Radio and television programs evidently reach a large number of these homemakers. Most of the homemakers had read an Extension newsletter mailed to them prior to being interviewed.

6. The interests of these homemakers range over many topics. More expressed a need for information about interior decorating, educational opportunities for children, and dieting than other items. However, about one-fourth of the homemakers were interested in many other homemaking topics. A large number indicated willingness to attend meetings on simple household repairs if they were held in their local community. The women varied considerably in number of topics in which they were interested. Better educated, younger homemakers expressed a broader range of interests than older, less educated homemakers.

7. Preferred methods of receiving information were newsletters and newspapers. Hence, these homemakers were quite similar to the farm homemakers in interests and communication methods preferred.

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